

Fortnightly Sermon

By
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CHICAGO, ILL.

VOLUME 1

TRIPLE NUMBER

NUMBERS 9, 10, 11

THE RICHES OF LIFE.

This Sermon was given to the Congregation in three parts on
consecutive Sundays.

CHICAGO

THIRD CHURCH PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, 917 WEST MONROE STREET

1889

Entered at the post-office at Chicago as second-class matter.

NOVEMBER 1, 1889.

THE FORTNIGHTLY SERMON

Will be issued on the 1st and 15th of every month, containing Mr. Blake's current discourses in the pulpit of the Third Unitarian Church of Chicago. The series will comprise twenty to twenty-six sermons in the year, the number depending on whether the vacation months be omitted or not.

Price, postpaid, 50 cents a year. Per copy, five cents.

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THE RICHES OF LIFE.

“The earth is full of thy riches.”—PSALM CIV. 24.

This great and glorious psalm is one of the two or three places in the Old Testament in which riches has a wider and higher meaning than merely wealth or money. Indeed, the riches of life, or perhaps better I may say the riches of living, is rather a thought of the New Testament than of the Old. I have met, indeed, but one other passage in the Old Testament in which the word *riches* is applied to aught more than the having of material wealth, which is that good saying in Proverbs, “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; and there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”

But the New Testament is full of this glowing thought of the riches of living, of the riches of mind, of the heart, of the soul. In Luke we have the parable of the rich man who thought within himself to pull down his barns and build greater, and heap all his fruits and his goods in them, and say to his soul, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry;” and, says the evangelist, when God shall require his soul of him this night, whose shall these things be that he has provided? Such is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Like to this is the saying in the first epistle of Timothy, “rich in good works,” which the Apostle says must be our aim, that we be not lofty-minded, nor trust in the uncertain riches, but in the certain ones, which is riches in good works. So the Epistle of James says, “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith?” And again in the book of Revelation it is said that he

that is the First and the Last saith to the churches, "I know thy works and tribulations and poverty, but thou art rich." In Paul and the apostles this glowing thought of riches of life is far forth to the front. Paul says in his letter to the Romans, "The Lord is rich unto all that call on him;" and again in another place, "The riches of his goodness, forbearance and long suffering," cries the apostle; and in yet another place in the same letter, "The riches of his glory;" and the same expression occurs in the letter to the Ephesians. In another place in the Romans he says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." And in the epistle to the Ephesians we have these sayings: "Rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loves us," "The exceeding riches of his grace," "The unsearchable riches of Christ;" and in Colossians the apostle speaks of "The riches of a full assurance of the understanding, the full knowledge of the mystery of God." In the Hebrews it is said that the reproach of Christ, which is to say the reproach that men endured for his cause, "is counted greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" and in Corinthians Paul writes, "For your sakes Christ became poor that ye, through his poverty, might be rich."

It is quite wonderful that thus the word *riches* comes into the New Testament alive with such a new and glowing sense, whereas in the old Hebrew scriptures it had but the common meaning of ordinary wealth. Let us take up this subject, let us look a little at the riches of living. This has been pressing on my mind and heart all this summer. How the subject crowds indeed! If I must try to speak of it in a little space, as I must, it seems like treating of history in a page, or reading some grand volume in an hour, or taking ten thousand miles of landscape on a canvas. And yet I bethink me that this last can be done *if we paint the heavens*; yea, and ten million miles. So we may speak in brief of the riches of living, if we take a high and heavenly scope, if we apply to the riches that are like the sky, and so bring a vast view into a small space.

The riches of life are Nature, Creation; again, Mankind; again, Experience of Ourselves. Or thus I may phrase these riches: The joy of observation and knowledge, the joy of love and liberty, the joy of labor and obedience. Let us speak of these in order.

First, look at Nature. This map unrolled before our wondering eyes—what a riches of life! what a splendor to walk in! To walk in it day by day, as we may, is riches of pleasure. It is a pleasant thing to go about, pleasant to look, listen, hear, to see or to smell. Pleasant, say I? I have be-thought me at some moments in this last jubilant flowering season that to walk about was glorious, like a king's progress. I can see from my window a lime kiln; soon I go by it; a tall column of black smoke rises from it. Even in the daylight I see a brush of red flame laboring with the smoke. After the smoke is gone, a delicate white mist ascends, draping the air. I pass some wood sawyers at work; I admire the large, keen teeth of the double-handed saw; and the smell of the cut wood is delicious, wholesome. I hear the hum and smell the clean flavor of a grist mill. I stand a long time admiring the whirling stone, snuffing the wholesome dust, handling the brown wheat. I look into the window of a swarthy place, where plow-shares are ground. A workman holds one on a movable frame; when he brings it against the huge stone, streams of sparks fly off like a comet's tail. I meet a boy full of brown health. What a sight he is, running down the hill to the west! His cap hangs on the back of his head, and the broad leathern visor is turned to the north star. I observe a squirrel sitting erect; I see that he has a black nut in his hand-paws, and another near by a piece of apple. Crosses my path a handsome white hen, with black marks on her back and wings; she has found a ripe, red tomato. I find a tree-toad in a well cover. I know how his voice sounds when he is in the tree. I see that he looks like a piece of breathing bark. I hear the locust spring his rattle at noon when the air is full of the delicious heat, and the frog and tree insects at night, more shrill than any human instrument can pitch a tone. At sunset I wait long, looking at the river, at the solemn palisades of rock rising until the western clouds cover them with golden drapery. In some places the river is smooth, in others covered with ripples. The trees far below those battlements make feathery shadows in the water long after they have melted into one black mass away up the slope. A star one hour high shoots a ray of light straight down into the water; it ends in sprays and sprinkles of light like a fountain in the air.

I hear many cheerful night-sounds in the coolness; I hear children playing and calling one another; I note dogs growling and baying in the distance; I hear a band of music; it ends a piece with a long, sweet tone and a *staccato* chord with a drum-beat; I hear the pretty voices of girls, talking and laughing; and a rapid step on the pavement sounds happy. Such are the things we walk among, even the little things, and each one of them full of beauty, of the riches of life. In the hundred and fourth Psalm, where I have chosen my text, the poet speaks of many of these things with a Hebrew's sense of majesty. He says: "God covereth himself with light as with a garment, and stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain;" he "lays the beams of his chambers in the waters;" the clouds are his chariots, and he walks on the wings of the wind. There are springs in the valleys which run among the hills; they give drink to the beasts of the field, and the wild asses are there quenching their thirst. The fowls of the heavens come and make their habitations and sing there among the branches. He causes grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man. Near by are trees full of sap—the trees which he has planted—and to them come the storks, and other birds, and they make the fair trees their houses. The hills are covered with wild goats; and the moon riseth for his season, and the sun knoweth his going down. Darkness comes on, and the beasts of the forest creep forth, and the young lions roar after their prey. Behold, also the sea, the great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, small and great beasts, the leviathan which has been formed to play therein, yea, and the ships that man hath made. And man goeth forth to his work and to labor until the evening.

If we look at man now as the Psalmist has looked, and see him among these other wonders, what riches to see and to note! Among all beauties, what beauty like the human body! The splendor of it, its superb and stalwart agility, its supple grace, its swiftness, its exercise, its endurance,—what equal to these? Then, too, the science of its structure, its anatomy, its science of health, of disease! The human voice is the most tender and exquisite of all vocal sounds, and sweeter than all instruments of music, being vibrant with soul. Also how dear it becomes

when 'tis the voice of a friend, being like a sweet song in itself, so full is it of feeling, so tender with the vibrations of love, or so reverberent with precious memories. The human face—what riches! what forcible light, like a sun! how exquisite its symmetry, how noble its power, how sensitive the mouth, how raptuous the eye, and how beautiful altogether! how sublime and tender the emotions that move on it! And the human hand, why this is the wonder of all creation, as well as one of the greatest beauties of the whole earth. Its mechanical perfection is the delight and astonishment of the philosopher, its form is the charm of the artist, its signs of character are marvelous; it is a tool, a weapon, a grace, a glossary of sign-language; its clasp is love, friendship, faithfulness, honor, protection. What riches of delight, of joy, are in the human body! And those of the soul in the body, the wonders of men's doing, the wonders that he hath made by employing his body on all the material frame about him! The acts, the inventions, the imaginations, —these glow like lamps in every village and hamlet, they fill our dwellings with marvelous utensils and conveniences, they clothe us with lovely fabrics, they make industry and cheerfulness to abound. The science, too, of all this wondrous army of things! I include the descriptive sciences, botany, zoology, geology, and the sciences of minerals, birds, shells, and the experimental sciences, properly called physics, mechanics, accoustics, optics, heat, electricity; also astronomy, which holds a radiant and unapproachable place of its own. What rapturous pursuits are these! what riches of living! what vistas of order, force, time, they open! what entrancing beauty in the grand and in the minute, when man in his soul takes his station and makes his body work, as we may say, on the infinite body. We sit reverently at the feet of those magicians whose wand is observation, whose spell is thought. Magicians? Nay, priests and prophets, who open to us these splendors, richer than all the mines of the East, and these marvels greater than Arabian imagination ever dreamed. Poetry, painting, music, sculpture, architecture, the drama, all are riches; all have such histories and such fullness that any one may be the subject of huge volumes, the long and deep study of a life-time.

These are the vessels by which beauty brings her loads of

graces or riches from that unknown country where they grow, to spread them in our cities, homes and lands. What a wealth! what riches of thought,—wonderful, inexhaustible!

The feats of the masters of language, of the poets who have known how to use syllables, of the learned men who have had wit to acquire the different tongues of the earth and with them do wonders of research into the condition and movements of the race long before the age of history, the aid of speech in the study of religions, the deciphering and rescuing of whole national histories from oblivion,—these are among the triumphs of human riches. Speech is such a thrilling, beautiful, masterful, wondrous function, that display of its history or nature or capacities, is great glory.

All this I see, I feel, I note about me. If you keep your minds and eyes and ears open for these things, you shall not take any walk, in what day or hour soever, but they shall come one on another, and then troops of them together, crowding on your soul. I look at faces. Each one hath a look, an art, a faculty, a place, a duty, a joy, a struggle, a wonder;—"what a piece of work!" The effect of going about much, if we will use our eyes, as we should if we were walking among riches to know them, is to behold such a panorama of great creatures, all about us, as must fill us full with the thought of the riches of life.

Let us not get used to these virtues, to be dull and dry among them. I knew a wise man who took by the hand a little maiden who was about to enter the solemnity of marriage, and taking her away for a little talk, he said to her: "My child, I give thee one counsel,—never get used to love! Be never used to it! If thou try hard, thou canst keep it a perpetual wonder." What if we saw a man now indeed for the first time? How should we be quelled to our knees! And a star for the first time, creation widened at night? How should we burn with unutterable praise! And yet every morning we ought to awake as to a first time of men and things, and feel "how beautiful it is to be alive." All is great and admirable, and very important, like a plainly-clad herald charged with matters of great moment. I can but exclaim with the poet:—

"I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars.
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the
Wren.

And the tree-toad is a *chef d'oeuvre* for the highest.
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven.
And the narrowest hinge in my hand points to scorn all machinery.
And the cow crunching with depressed head, surpasses any statue.
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels."

But turn now from nature to mankind. Man himself, our neighbors, our friends, and all the people that fill the continents, these are riches of life! How we are drawn and woven into the little circles of those that come near and very close to the heart! I call this second department of the riches of life, the joy of love and liberty. Why I speak here of *liberty* with love, I shall explain by and by. But now I will speak simply of the riches of the affections. Think of the array of them, and what they include, the things that centre in them and cluster with them. There is birth. What interest rests on the mystery of the assembling of that congress of qualities, which each one calls "I," and on its advent to this new earth! How strange the thought of that unfathomable depth from which we come, which seems to be all light beneath, but over it floats a drapery, a thin drapery of impenetrable darkness. We see the light through it. How impossible to admit the thought of a beginning. Yet there comes that little life, rising like a lily to the surface; and we know not how it is planted or rooted, or whence it rises to dance on the wave which, God grant, be a sunny wave unto it by our means. And round that little life the affections gather as it grows to childhood. How pathetic the helplessness of the little child as it grows! how tender its disposition! how ready to forgive! What answerableness lies on us to strive by patience, by prayer and watchfulness, to guard and lead well the little child! Oh, what riches given, of which we are the stewards!

So the child comes to youth. Then open the charms of life, that call either with a siren's voice or with an angel's, according to the ear of the young soul, whether tuned to heavenly or to earthly strains. Think of the choices then made—how

beautiful they may be! how sad! how radiant with life, how ghastly with death! This is the time when education is tested, when the influences of childhood, the father's precept, the mother's prayer, the example of both, the inheritance (we know not how far back), begin to grow into lilies or nightshade. Then draws on middle age. The affections have kept pace with the unfolding life; the riches of love come forth to meet the riches of experience. Now brims the cup of energy and activity; the body is fully ripe, the strength adequate to labor, to enjoy, to sorrow too. This is the time of mature and grave issues. Life sometimes is storms of passions that rage over the soul; but if the spirit can answer to the heavenly voice, those waves will be tipped with white, and toss a pure spray into the sky, and the farther upward to the stars will it go the mightier has been the surge. So, with the power and glory of mid-life, we come at last to the rounding down of old age from the hilltop—a moving theme. The affections gather around it with great riches. It is a resplendent sight if it be noble, and in all ages old age has loaned its silver to the tongues of sages and bards. A beautiful charm rests on the evening of a life well spent. A holy light, as of something both ending and beginning, hovers around it, a most wonderful beam, like the light in the west, which is evening-red to us, morning-red to those who live beyond. Age also grows very tender in love. The aged live in a benign, wide-reaching and beautiful love, founded sometimes in their own temptations, struggles, victories. Woe be to the old man who knows not the young, having forgotten his own youth!

And so come we to death. Nay, I like not the word; we come to *dying*. Dying is not death; nay, but an act of life. It is sure to come; it hastens on with every flying minute. Yet see how far it is from casting any shadow of fear or gloom on us. The affections, when it comes, stoop over it, as they stoop over naught else but a birth. But we enjoy heartily, we love dearly, nay, we dance, we sing, in gladness of heart; and all of it, every laugh, and look, shakes off trembling leaves into earth's warm lap,—a holy and lovely mystery; not dreadful, nor repulsive nor shocking, but mysterious.

All the way along this wondrous rich path, friendship

beams. Friend-love makes a great part of all full lives. It fills the days with love, with helpfulness; it keeps the earth full of company for us in many different corners where our friends live; it blooms as well in absence as in presence of our friends, yea, sometimes meseems it blooms better; for when we get far away from one, it is very hard to think of his blemishes. Friendship is a perfect confidence, a mutual trust in trouble and sympathy in joy; also a source of warning, of guidance, of knowledge of ourselves. And sometimes this friendship—for that is the right way of it—blooms to what we call peculiarly love, that exquisite, delicate sentiment which draws two persons together into the most mysterious and holy of all unions. It is a mighty friendship, when perfected, with somewhat added. I may challenge any one to tell me what that something is. It is elemental. Loving should rest on character, on moral worth and intellectual companionship; and over all these comes that somewhat from heaven which is like light in the day at high noon, irradiating everything, but blinding us if we look at it too directly. Such love is stable and glorious.

With this comes on the wondrous union of marriage. So enters marriage into all life that it is the theme of all stories and poems, the one union of lives of which all else seems prediction. No words can say too much of the riches or of the sanctity of that union, its supreme joy, or its great misery, according to our power to rejoice or to sorrow. In this wondrous riches, to keep them, the rule should be to throw away naught and let naught lie unused, but gather every possibility of companionship, cherish every little point where association, fellowship, appreciation, respect, admiration may quicken. Seek for them. This will enlarge the extension of the union till it shall cover the whole domain of life with a companionship which is strong inspiration and joy, encouraging each to the best things to be done and rewarding each with the dearest praise to be had. Nay, what other praise may be sought? None, none. The admiration and praise of the bosom friend are the only lauds that ever one ought to seek. With this, the work should be spread broadcast, without thought of the return of it.

Such are the affections. So manifold, so creative, so truly of God, such a riches of the heart in life!

O divine Love, O great riches of life, that fillest heaven and earth like light, "offspring of heaven, first-born"—nay, not first-born, nor second, nor at all, not, indeed, having being in time but time in thee—uncreated, infinite, eternal Love, how dost thou lift human hearts into the heaven where thou art! Nay, I would say rather, how dost thou make us to see that this heaven surrounds the earth which floats midway of it! and never was it otherwise, and love bathes it in providence, and yet shall in bliss! Like water which is all one everywhere, so that whether it be a mountain spring, or torrents of rapids and waterfalls, or a calm running river whose motion is too deep to be seen, still it is one with the ocean and riseth therefrom, and goes back thereto to rise again, and in its circle refreshes all things, plant and man, and beast and creeping thing, so art thou, O Love, which art one everywhere; and whether in child's heart, or man's, or woman's, and whether in one or in a nation when a million hearts beat like one, or whether consorting with knowledge, or with the untaught—yea, whether even with gentle and delicate souls, or with the rough, the rude—yea even with the savage in the forest, and besides these, even in the hearts of good dumb beasts that are faithful and feel thy pangs and joys, O Love, in all these thou art one with the Infinite Life, the eternal, the all-holy, the Almighty, and risest therefrom and goest back thereto, and again risest, coming by death and life, by sleeping and waking, by morning and evening, and in thy circles filling the springs of joy, refreshing man and beast and creeping thing, yea, and the very plants which love will not let die of thirst; and dost bless the dreams of youth, the joy of mid-age, the peace of the old, the birth by which we come, and again the birth by which we go—the cradle, the school, the store, the bed, the grave! O Love, what dost thou not hold! O, Love, what dost thou lack! Naught, naught, naught! Thou hast all heaven, since thou art of Him whose abode is all the heavens which he hath inhabited eternally. Love, thou canst make this earth a blooming garden, full of such flowers as never yet were seen; for these blossoms shall be joy, and peace, and grace, and praise, and thanks. Love, thou dost take the nearest persons, those that belong to the heart that loveth them, they that make the home and live close together,

thou takest them, O Love, and being near, thou makest them nearer, and being alike, thou makest them more alike and drawest them together till they seem as one; and having joys under one roof, thou dost bring the joys to be but as in one soul under one roof, and all the sorrows to be as in one heart! This thou canst do, O Love, and blest is life when thou hast done it. Then canst thou reach out, O thou heavenly Being, Love, thou canst reach out to them that are afar, and to them that are unlike; and as thou dost gather the near and the like into one, so canst thou call the far till they come near, and the unlike till they become similar; and we shall know what those afar are feeling because they have come near, and the beats of their hearts strike on ours as waves from coast to coast. And thou makest us to know, O Love, what thoughts rise in others, though unlike and speaking another tongue and in other labors working, different from ours, because thou hast made us—thou alone, O Love—akin in soul, and hast drowned the unlikeness, and hast gathered, as of one blood, all that speak and feel, yea, and that feel but speak not, the dumb creatures and the creeping things! And when thou hast done this, O Love, and they that are near have become as one, and they that are far have come near, then dost thou take all as one family into a temple, yea, and show them that their home is a temple, and all the riches of the temple thou showest them, and dost lead them all together into the glory of the joy of the worship of Love, of One, our Father, our Strength and our Redeemer. O Love, show us this holy thing! Show us what thou art; teach us, make us humble that we may learn. Let us fall down and hear while thou dost speak; and then lift us, O Love, to lead us to peace, to kindness, to long-suffering, to thought, not of ourselves, but of others, that joy may live in the earth as is natural, and that we shall not be shut in our own hearts but know what others feel. This thou canst do, O Love!

So have I spoken of the riches of life which nature is by its great abundance of glories to see and hear and know; also of

the riches which our fellow-beings are unto us, by deep joys and wealthy marvels of affections, which can do such wondrous works and give such great blessings. Now I come to speak of the riches of life which each man may be unto himself. This is the third point of my sermon, that there is great riches in our exercise and experience of ourselves, which is the same as to say in labor and obedience. This is because we are such creatures as we are, so wondrously framed, with such organs, powers, thoughts, with such a place and function. In truth I would say *any* creature is riches unto itself. Yes, for to live is riches. To have life, if it be no more than as the ciliæ sweep currents of pleasant food-bearing water into a polyp's mouth, is riches. How much more, then, to know that we live, to look forth on life and see it, to behold other creatures living, and hence to reflect the more on our own life and the manner of it, how much more is this great riches! "For friends and brethren's sake, I will never cease to say" that life is very riches in itself. No, however some may speak of woes and ills, or however, doing much worse, some call life itself a woe or ill, a naught, a failure, an idle or wanton sport or jest, or grim jeer of fate, I will not cease to say life itself is riches, the riches of God, the wealth of the heavens, glorious, divine and holy. What great riches unto ourselves, then, may we be in this riches of life, being so rich a creature in this riches as to know it and think of it, and look forth on it!

Our riches unto ourselves, as I have said, is our experience and exercise with ourselves in the two ways of labor and obedience. Every lot has somewhat in it to do and somewhat to bear. Men can do naught more than to labor and to bear. Either to labor or to bear is obedience. Therefore all our riches unto ourselves is in obedience, in what way soever we be led or commanded. And this is right and as it must be; for the Creator is the riches of creation. God is the riches of riches, and our obedience to him must be the only riches that we become unto ourselves.

But now take labor by itself. What a great and good riches of life work is! Sometimes it has "a frowning brow for its disguise," for labor seems as if it would fain steal on us and take us slowly to its heart, as a friend does in the making of a new

friend, and let us learn gradually what a riches we have gotten when we think it but a lumpish slag or dross, mayhap.

Yes, labor thus often disguises its lovely face, and always duty does thus; for each is so very sweet that its sweetness seems guarded and hedged about by nature, and not to be had at first taste of it, but only after the struggle to open it and explore it; which is only to say in plainer phrase, that *first steps cost, and beginning always are hard*. But nevertheless labor is a grand and noble riches, worthy for a man to cherish, and to be known by a man to be riches.

Work is a riches by what it makes, or what it guards, for us. This I speak of first as the lowest way in which work is riches, that it brings things contributing to us, things both useful and healthful, and brings wealth to us, for labor subdues the earth to us. The eye, the ear, takes in great riches, glorious and great riches; but the hand must work on the substance of these glories to subdue it, and to make some of the splendors at will too, to join them in pairs and fours and tens, and in troops, to make them serve and enrich us with their marvels of qualities and properties and powers. Therefore labor is riches by the riches it brings unto us. "Industry need not wish," said Franklin; no, for it gets; it is the power that puts the wish into shape of fact; it is the capital that grows other riches, like fruits on a tree. But here again we run on the truth that labor *itself* is riches. This is a truth so shining that it cannot be hidden, but shows itself everywhere by the glow around it. "Industry need not wish"; no, truly, it is too rich in itself to be wishing. It will have an aim, a great aim, mayhap, a far and mighty aim, that shall stay distant a long time, and come nearer, hovering, looming, very slowly; but labor will be content the while and see the aim as a grand, a heartening, a towering splendor, like mountains before the traveler. Doth the traveler bewail the road to the hills while their glory is before him all the way, changing and looming, and cloud-clothing itself, and again undrapping and glowing in the sun at every step of him? Nay, not more does manly labor bemoan itself in wishes. It is too rich in itself. It is life at high powers. What should it be wishing? Look therefore no longer at the hand of labor by which it gathers things, but at the soul of it, and see that it is great riches of life in

itself, as I have said, and somewhat to be thankful for, and taken as no curse, but as a blessing and wealth from God. Labor is self-unfolding, and that is great riches. Is anything more wealthy to you than to grow? Has any man aught that is so great riches to him as himself? If then he grow and unfold and flourish, his greatest wealth is rolling up. This is what work does. It makes us more; it unfolds and increases us; it opens forth our power and unrolls the map of our qualities to be a guidance and a knowledge to us and wakes up our strength like a sleeping lion dragged forth and roused until his might amazes and shakes us. By naught but labor can a man be this riches to himself, that he unfolds and opens and knows himself and sees the might that is in him, and has a grand and amazing view of himself, and is enraptured by what he may become—by naught but labor. The very trees will not root themselves unless they wrestle with boisterous winds and labor in tempests. Therefore, is not labor great riches? is it not itself a riches of life? What manner of man is he who calls it a vexation, an ignominy, a hateful thing, a poverty? What manner of thinker is he? what kind of worshiper? Nay, no worshiper, but a scoffer; and no thinker, but a babbler; nor hardly a man at all, but most unmanly, servile, and more like cattle who take no thought beyond what they can get for the cropping of it. Yet there lack not men, and some who vaunt their wisdom much, who call nature but a maimed kind of nature because labor is fixed to it, because work is ordained; and life, say they, is a hard and thistle-grown field, a poor fare, a starving or else sweating caravan to the grave.

O! in my soul I do rejoice against such, and pity them with a kind of wondering pity, that they make labor a poverty, which is, in truth, the most heavenly of riches. I can but sing with joy because life is a riches and not a waste. I would stand in the market-place and cry it over and over, that life is wondrous riches, that nature, with all glories of sea and land and heavens, is riches to every sense, and human fellowship a holy wealth by love, and a man great riches unto himself by labor. And if any say that labor is a task, I answer, Labor is life, and not to strive and put forth by strength were death. And if any one say that wisdom has labor annexed to it, I answer, Not so, but labor has wisdom annexed to it; and labor is the oppo-

site of drift and nothingness; and if we rise out of naught, cometh wisdom immediately. But labor is a strain, they say, and strain is a grievance; it is wearisome and over-weighting, and men are huddled by it into gangs of slaves, and the best is bound and pent and worn by it, and but staggers along like a beast of burden. I answer that often it is a strain, a long, hard strain; because so needful a thing is work, and so heaven-weighty, that we must carry it, and yet have not learned to carry it. Well, up with it, then! lift it! by carrying learn to carry! This is a man's part with it, if it be reasonable that it is better to be a man than a worm. This is the whole problem. Is it better to be a man than a worm? If it be better, then all that a man does and must do and carry, is but the riches whereby he is a man and not a worm. Labor is yet a great weight, for so vast riches is not handled easily nor lifted well until men have learned much. Hard struggles, oh how hard!—rude and grinding toils, long and hope-hiding fagging, grim travail, pale drudgery—these hang on us like iron collars and clank like leg-fetters. But this is the drag and grind of the great weight of treasure, while we have not learned to pull at it all together. Sometime we shall learn; but it shall be true then, and now is, and forever must be, that work is noble. It is the badge of the King on us. Labor itself is riches of life, being the self unfolding of the soul to become rich and to know that it is so. Oh, what evil preaching is that which calls labor a primal curse! What mean thinking, what slave's babble, that it is an ill now, that it is to bear burdens and “groan and sweat under a weary life;” as if to sleep, to sport and to be at ease, were the riches of life and a man's part in creation! No, to work is riches and noble, mighty and high. It is profusion of riches, poured all around us like rain on a full soil. It is glory and light, honesty and beauty, decoration and honor and power—a riches of joy. “The very exercise of industry immediately, in itself, is delightful,” says Barrow, in his strong way, “and hath an innate satisfaction which tempereth all annoyance and even ingratiateth the pains going with it.” But “sloth is a base quality, the argument of a mind wretchedly degenerate and mean, which is content to grovel in a despicable state, which aimeth at no worthy thing, nor pursueth anything in a laudable way, which disposeth a man to live gratis

and ingratelously on the public stock, as an insignificant cipher among men, as a burden on the earth, as a wen of any society, culling aliment from it, but yielding no benefit or ornament thereto."

Labor fills the world with a vast net-work, which is one of the most rich of all sights. Think of our banks, the carrying trade, the roads, the machinery by which transportation is effected, the vast bulk of that transportation moving all the time—a mighty wonder—the postal service, international relations, and the dependence of the ends of the earth on each other, happily increasing all the time, great riches triumphing over wants—all these fill the mighty artery of life with a torrent. No sluggard shall know the riches of life. I mean not that he shall be poor in purse, though it is often so; but if he have gold galore, still he shall have no riches of life if he lag or lounge slothful and lumpish, or if he skip and sport selfish and giddy. For how can the riches of life be shared if one take no part in what makes all the riches, the universal labor? There is a ceaseless labor in all creation; what is he who will not work but an alien, then? He hath no state in creation for all moves and labors, full of this great riches of work. "The heavens do roll about with unwearied motion, the sun and stars do perpetually dart their influences; the earth is ever laboring in the birth and nourishment of plants; the plants are drawing sap and sprouting out fruits and seeds to feed us and propagate themselves; the rivers are running, the seas are tossing, the winds are blustering to keep the elements sweet in which we live."

Another riches that comes with work, is thought. Thought itself is labor, great labor, of all labor the very greatest, the crown of humankind; and therefore no riches of life is like to the riches which thought is, for labor is the greatest riches, and to think is the greatest labor. "Who doth not find that all the power in the world is not able to command, nor all the wealth of the Indies to purchase, one notion." Yea, this great riches of life, the wonder, glory, animation, exhilaration of thoughts echoing and coursing through us is to be had by any man who will labor with his mind, and is not to be bought for any less price than the riches of labor. What a wonder of riches, what a great and blessed fullness of life, that its greatest riches, which are

love and thoughts, may be had by any one who will come after them with heart-full and head-full work. And who can utter what a riches thought is? The virtue of thinking, the faculty of reflecting, the gift of ruminating, the strength of considering, the lustiness of reasoning, the sway of ideas—who can tell such riches! Who can count the riches that have gathered? For thought has been for ages like the ocean, burying wealth, but giving naught back, and losing naught. And all these riches washed together in thought's bed he may take of who will use the greater riches of the power of the air and the power of the water by thinking, and become a rich magician over the elements. How delicate and effluent, but mighty and unbounded, like a genie's substance, is the riches of thinking! That we can match things together, lay one by another and build of them; and compare things to see the likeness of them and the unlikeness, and conclude therefrom; and gather the things to be put together and the things to be compared, from all parts of the earth and all kinds of knowledge; that we can leap anywhere in an instant and behold anything by the mind's eye, yea, and be with it, and return, and yet in our journey of thought have kept the hands busy at their task here and the feet walking whither they were pointed; that we can fly like light from thought to thought, from truth to truth, from one to another curious thing and among discoveries like trees in a forest, yea, with swiftness to which light is naught,—what riches of “angels, principalities and powers, of height and depth,” are these faculties! That we can put two things together and conclude from them a certainty; that we can gather a host of things and conclude from them one law of them all; that we can think the eternal and necessary, seeing not merely that some things are so, but that so they must be,—this is “apprehension like a god;” this, by “deep calling unto deep,” is to look verily into the face of God, not to die, as the old chronicle threatens, but the more to live. This the psalmist has expressed: “Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me! How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” O what riches of life is this power of thinking! What a glory of exercise, till the mind's countenance, as the prophet says of the body's health-

ful visage, "is as sapphire!" What a wonder of forthgoing! What riches of excursion! What wealthy voyage as of a rich ship on the ocean under sun and star unto far rich regions to return with still more riches of lustrous stuffs and gems! By the wings of the riches of thought, flying not away like the riches of gold which take to themselves wings, but carrying us upward above constraints, and making us to go through all bars like a spirit, we are lifted into our pure selves, as if undraped of the body that has weight. For often when earnestly I have been thinking, and when with double thinking I have been setting the thoughts with words, I have been translated and lifted so out of my body's presence and senses, that I have come back to my tenement with a shock, as if I had burst suddenly through a roof or flown in at a skylight, and with Paul I cry, "I know a man caught up even to the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body I know not; God knoweth!"

Another riches of life by labor is health, which simply is the strength and completeness of the bodily part of this earthly life. With labor, which is exercise of ourselves, comes soundness, haleness, freshness; we bloom, we are hardy and stanch, we have a flush, a vigor, "more ruddy in body than rubies, the visage as of sapphire." With inaction, sleeping and ease, and getting somewhat for nothing, come distempers and taints, infections, plagues; we decay, we are polluted; lameness, halting, withering fall on us. No one knows what real health is, as finely has been said, unless he feel every moment like standing up and shouting with joy, to give thanks for the mere blessing of existence. And spiritual health is like unto bodily health, in rejoicing in simply being, in being here, and in knowing this great life that we have here. As to be in bodily health is to rejoice in mere existence, so to be in spiritual and mental health is to rejoice wonderfully in the riches of life, and to spread out, as it were, the members of the soul into them, to disport, to go about and delight and put forth strength in them, as the body waves its members, arms and legs, and pushes forth with ecstasy, glow and glee, in the air and water, and stamps the earth with the foot and runs for very joy and power!

Such riches of life is labor that even forced labor, hard and heavy, too heavy, yet hath its worth and power in behalf of

good for us, and is simply too heavy riches piled in one spot, too heavy for the time and too much gathered. A friend wrote me "How blessed, after all, is that business which keeps us so at work that we cannot be lonely," and another wrote me, "I have my anxiety and pain, but thanks be to God I am at work again." Therefore if labor is often heavy, remember that it is but a heavy shield, very heavy mayhap, but still a shield, and behind it we escape many hurts and pains and pangs and wants. A man laboring is like one carrying a long rope coiled round and round his neck, which he cannot unwind, which fain he would cut in half, or throw away all of it if he can not be rid of a part. But when he falls into a pit, then is the rope immediately his riches, more than all his other possessions, the means whereby he climbs out of that pit. Yea, a riches of life is labor! a riches of riches! so blessed! so beautiful! a riches like gold! so strong and fruitful a riches, like deep soils and watered valleys! Who is not decked that labors? Who that works is not made full of man-worth, and shall not lift up his head high, and walk proudly, and see the sky nod to him and the sun salute him? Of late I went up into a high building and took a look out over a great city. I noticed what never I had seen before, the steam-pipes on nearly every roof in that dense working part of the city, pouring forth their white and beautiful vapors. It seemed to me, as I stood admiring, like a gala head-gear of labor. I thought of all the industry, of the riches of the industry, that those cloudy vapors meant, those feathery ornaments. It seemed to me the city was dressed for the blithe riches of work, clad in red bonnets waving with white plumes.

Another part of the exercise of ourselves is bearing, enduring. Shall I call endurance a riches of life? Shall I say that bearing of pain and grief must be called a wealth of life? Is this a false, tricksey, sentimental gospel? Do I but play with words if I call endurance a riches? Well, why not a riches? In my soul I love chivalry in life. 'Twas a noble quality in the old knighthood, that the knight sought arduous adventures. 'Twas not to be at ease, but to be at pains, that he donned armor. The greater his toils, vigils, exposures, sufferings, the more his honor and glory and the more he drew to his soul, as a rich garment around him, the knowledge that he was indeed a knight.

This was the ideal. Why not such an ideal for life? Nay, how little and shameful, how empty of all honor seems the ideal of life about us, that it is comfort and ease, that pleasures and soft charms are its riches!—Not so, but strength and power, and to be a grand human being, to be doing and bearing because this is arduous and noble, to be exercising ourselves, to be showing our strength by straining our strength to great actions of doing or bearing or trying, this is exalted, this is the fruit of the spirit, this is the outpouring of the earth, this delivers us joys and a vast sense of life which itself is very fire and flame of joy. And therefore, with grand bearing and enduring enters great riches of life. Shall I say that to bear richly is greater and grander than to labor richly? Yea, I will say so; for to bear is a kind of labor—to wrestle, to struggle and to toil, to bear up mightily, to be hardy, strong and straining when tumbling things would beat us down. This is labor; but it is labor with advantage of good ground, for it is labor on ourselves. If labor on the earth be bright riches, what riches is labor on ourselves? To bear, therefore, to endure nobly, quietly, not courting pain but not being a runaway from it, to lift a heavy weight and strain to it, yet groaning not unto others about it, because it is a brave duty and a human part, what riches is this! what proper glory! what fitness for a man! what riches of life above all ease and fortune and pleasures! Yea, I will call sorrow a riches of life. Is not this shown by the riches of soul needful unto sacred sorrow? For the empty, vain, frivolous, tripping and light-minded, they sorrow not, nor can they until they be rich above vanity and light things. They may be peevish or vexed or troubled, and cry much with pains and losses; but vexation and troubles are menial things. Sorrow belongs to royalty of soul, and is divine. Close with it comes riches, oh, great riches, that lift life into the divine light and show it truly, that it is of God, and full of the riches of God, which shall make peace. Riches of obedience, of knowledge, of wide knowledge and far sight, of power to feel, to restrain, to rule, to be strong, to bless God, oh, let us bethink us what riches this is! What a reason for living, what a seal on life in God's image, what honor and great riches!

I have called laboring and bearing obedience. This is not to be forgotten. Obedience is the source of great riches in life;

for obedience is the following of His will who hath made all riches, and we can come at them only by Him whose they are. And all things are filled with his power and spirit, so that if we obey with love and piety, all things work together for good to us, as Paul says; that is, to give us riches of life, and show life to be a great riches. If all things obey him, and we, too, obey, we are in league with all and have all things at hand and around us, marshaled well; and they serve us, agree with us, and life is full of their riches for us. Obedience of spirit toward God is to meet what comes to us, either to do or to bear, lift it up and carry it indoors, and take it, not rejecting nor bemoaning, wailing nor muttering, nor running from it. This obedience toward God is like unto knowledge or science toward nature. An economist says: "Through virtue and labor to knowledge, through the control which knowledge may give over the forces of nature to leisure, and through leisure to welfare, not only material, but mental and spiritual, appears to be the method of evolution which the power that makes for righteousness has established as the law governing the portion of human life which is spent on this earth while man dwells in the material body." So, first by labor and discipline forced on us comes the obedient spirit, and by this spirit labor rises into riches, and discipline into a power which is beauty; and then by obedience we are led, led and shown the way, and thereupon all things help us. Then comes peace and leisure, and thereby new knowledge and life, new joy and riches and good. And so the blessedness of religion comes down on us, because we have climbed unto life's riches. Our praise and thought and victory go up to God, and when they come back from him we call them his blessings; and so they were when they rose up unto him from us; and they come back "filled with immortality." The religious feeling rises like the mist from the earth, which, says the old poet, returned again to water the ground. Think of the source of life from which we spring. We gaze, we think on all the riches of creation, from the minute life which is so wonderful and so perfect, so enriched with beauty, so agile in the water drop, to the enormous spheres and transcendent spaces of the heavens; we think of human riches, love, experience; and religion says to the lowly, to the obedient, Your interests, your needs, your longings, aspirations, labors, sorrows,

are a part of the riches of God's world. Fear not. You are not dropped from the hand that guides the stars. Strive, watch, pray, trust; you shall see the face of God.—It is delightful to notice in the Bible the constant song of joy therein, to observe how the singers and prophets and moralists therein cry aloud that we must “rejoice evermore,” because life is such riches of God. The great book is full of such sayings: “Good tidings of great joy to all people;” “Enter into our Master's joy that our joy may be full, and such as no man can take from us;” “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart;” “God's law rejoiceth the heart, and is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb;” “In his presence is fulness of joy, yea, exceeding joy;” “Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” “Believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;” “In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice;” “My heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise him;” “The hope of the righteous shall be gladness;” “Rejoice in hope;” “A lively hope;” “An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled;” “They that love thy name shall be joyful in thee.”

“Is life worth living?” A wretched question. As if the blind should ask whether sight be worth having; or the deaf, Is sound worth knowing? For who would ask these things but the blind or the deaf? Tell me—Is song worth singing? Is music worth making? Is refreshment by water worth its time and cost? Yes, if there be thirst for song and music and cleanliness! And the soul thirsting for them will take song and music as they are, and love them, and bring them forth until their riches pour out like mountain waters. So, if there be a thirst for life, who that thirsts for it will ask if it be worth while to live, or whether better be a man than a worm? A thirst for life—what is it? A wish not to die? No, but a wish not to be dead. To die is like being snatched or rapt away from an orchard while my hand is on the fruit, while I am full of delight of eye in the color and shape of it, and my fingers wonder at its soft covering, and my mouth has the taste of it, and all my body is refreshed with the streams of it. But to be dead is like lying in that orchard a lump of clay, while the breezes blow, the trees murmur, the birds sing and fruits ripen, and I know them not, and

all these riches drop around me where I lie a clod—yea, and soon they cover me up and put me away that my body be not noisome to them that are athirst for life, who go thither for the riches of the fruits of it. Oh, I hope that with every day of joy we shall walk more wonder-struck, more reverent, more humble, more adoring, amid all these glorious forms of living power. Then the riches of life will make us rich, will become *our* riches; for each one has what he loves and is what he adores. Then we shall grow large in mind and heart by reason of knowing the great riches of life. We shall be able to add to our own little care or duty or labor or joy or sorrow (I say little, yea, though it be much, still I say little) the experiences and the powers of all other living creatures, and their thoughts, so that all that is in us will be made deeper, and we shall take the riches of life; and joy will become an earnest and solemn force within us.

A poet sings thus:

“To win, to find, to meet and to possess,
Delights thee in the walk of mortal life:
For lo! they win, they find now heavenly things:
This one a bride! That mother there a child!
A son, a wanderer comes back home again
To his old father! * * * * *
The housewife's batch of bread has turned out well!
The flax has prospered! The old orchard-tree
Will bear once more whole baskets-full of fruit!
The children are for winter warmly clad!
The first wee tooth shines in the infant's mouth!
Even such small joys thy heart can understand;
And privily thou seekest some dark nook,
And weepest a short moment, with dry eyes.
So liv'st thou glad for men and for thyself.”

Now I come to the practical matter, or moral question. By what means may we acquire the riches of life? How are we to enjoy these riches that are so plentiful and so glorious? I answer, Simply by observing our place and right relations toward them. And this place of ours, and these relations, are these: First, *to take* the riches. If you consider this, it is not a little thing; for it is really a great and rare wisdom to lift up and carry with us all the good things that fall at our feet as we

go. Secondly, *to hinder no other* in taking the riches; this is the law of justice. Thirdly, *to help others* to take the riches; this is the law of kindness. But the second and third, that is, the rules to hinder not others, but to help, give power for the first rule, the rule, namely, to take these riches as we meet them. Not to hinder others, and then heedfully to help others, are necessary to our own power of taking. For nothing so eats up our virtue to take the riches of life as selfishness; and it is selfish not to be just, and not to be helpful. Now this we shall see if we ask specially and carefully what selfishness is, and then how it stands related to the riches of life in the three kinds of these riches.

What then is selfishness? I answer that selfishness is not merely the seeking of things for ourselves; for we are commanded to love our neighbor *as* ourselves, which at least I interpret to mean that we may be concerned for our own interests and benefits. Besides, if we care for others, why not for ourselves too?—for each one, surely, is as considerable and important as an other one, and, therefore, a man as reasonably may care for himself as for any other person. If, moreover, we look not to our own good, how can we serve others? For if we care not for ourselves, soon we shall lose all power and substance to serve any others with. Therefore, I say, that selfishness means not, indeed, the seeking of benefits for ourselves, for this is both right and needful.

But let us look more closely. There are three factors in this question: First, each man's own self; secondly, the persons that are near, belonging to each one in his own special little realm of life; thirdly, all the world, the great family of man. Now, among these, and in devotion to each of them, there is a due balance which is order, goodness, help, happiness. Hence it follows that there may be evil devotion to others as well as to ourselves; and this evil devotion may be a bad concentration on either those dear ones close at hand and hard by us both in body and in heart, or also—and sometimes so it is—a thoughtless, unheeding and hurtful devotion to the great whole of the human family, neglecting those that are near. Selfish *action* is that kind of bad action which disturbs the due balance between oneself and those near by and the whole great world, unsettling that

balance by excess of interest for ourselves; that is to say, action for our own purpose without due regard to the good of the whole also. Selfish *thinking* is to think more toward and for ourselves than will keep the balance of our doing and our action right; and selfish *feeling* is to feel more for ourselves than will keep that due and right balance of action. Thus selfish thinking and selfish feeling are such as join not our own interests with the whole, but would follow our own without the whole, without due concern or plan for the whole.

This is all very plain. But now I remark what begins to reach toward the centre of this subject, that the danger of excess in devotion to either of these factors is different for each, and the greatest danger is that we shall be badly and harmfully, or cruelly, devoted to ourselves. The disturbance of the balance is most at hazard in that way. Which is to say, we run every day in life more risk of being devoted unduly to our own interests, than of thinking unduly of the pleasures of those near us, or of the good of all the world. This is because we have come up from a state of brute selfishness, and the conflict, the struggle, the war in such a state, still exists in us as a tendency, and even as a tradition. So that by the tendency we incline to great regard of ourselves, and by the tradition we lean to the praise of this self-love, declaring it right and wise. This bias is reinforced by the affections, because therein we tend to be selfish, not only for ourselves, but in behalf of those we love against the whole. Again it is roused and enforced by the fierce competitions of life, by the bad social order which now makes it so very hard to take care well of oneself except as one seems to be doing it in strife with others. Finally, the slow progress of mankind tends to excess of thinking of ourselves, yet this slow progress is necessary; that is, there is a need of all being good together for any one to be at his best, or even very good. Any one may act wrongly by himself easily; but one can act well, or be at his best, easily, only if all act rightly together. Hence it is that the slow progress of mankind and the continual wrongs about us make it so hard for us to free ourselves from ourselves, and climb above this danger of excess of self-interest.

But now if this be the danger, it makes a difference indeed, and is very important, what is the state and tendency of a man's

heart—the *state* and *tendency*, I say, of a man's heart, whether toward himself or toward others, that is, whether in the direction of the danger, or happily and blessedly contrary to this danger. Here we touch the subject at its depth; here we come to the practical point in these thoughts of the riches of life, that selfishness or unselfishness lies in the deep heart as a constant motive, and that selfishness, as I shall show, makes us poor amid the riches of life.

It appears, now, that it is not selfish to think of ourselves, nor to feel for ourselves; but—I pray you mark—to think of ourselves *first*, and feel for ourselves *most*. Which is to say, when occasion or choice comes to us, as daily they come in great numbers, what *first* leaps to a man's mind and heart, the thought for himself or for others? Which has the instantaneous forthcome? Then, after that, which *feels* he for *most*—himself or others? These are the test questions revealing the selfish or unselfish soul. With the brutes, from whom, so it now seems conceded and gradually more and more known, we have slowly climbed by divine upward drift, it is each one for himself. But now, if reason bring not the sense of one for others, and for all, it makes man a more dangerous animal than any other, but no nobler. As Froude has said, “Where all are selfish, the sage is no better than the fool, only rather more dangerous.” The growth must be toward balanced thought for oneself, for others, and for the whole. This balance gives shape and nobility to growing power.

Now, if I mistake not, this law or definition of selfishness, that it is thinking of oneself *first*, and then feeling for oneself *most*, throws great light on life, and shows us our true qualities. For example: It is selfish to harm any for our own pleasure, for this is to feel for ourselves *most*. It is also selfish not to try to benefit others with our own benefiting, for this is to think of ourselves not only *first*, but *only*. Again, if we see unfortunates, the poor, the maimed, the sick, the grieved, what shall we say instinctively? Ah, my friends, I do think this is a question reaching very deep down into one's soul—what *instinctively* shall we do? Rejoice that we are not like those unfortunates? That is selfishness—feeling for ourselves *most*. Shall we grieve that they are not so happy as we are? Will that be our *instinctive* feeling, and *first*? A searching test! That is righteous and

unselfish, for it is thinking of others, and feeling for them, *first* and *most*. This view of selfishness shows also why many persons are so very selfish in petty things, and so thoughtlessly selfish; as, for example, always taking the best of things if they be by, even the fairest looking of fruit when others are by to whom we should offer it, preferring them, and the most comfortable place while others are standing near—because such persons think of themselves *first*, and feel for themselves *most*. I will stop to make a practical application, because I like not to see a growing tendency among men, which I observe in the public vehicles constantly, not to arise and give their places to women. I have observed this curious fact, that a man who will keep his seat when a woman stands by unseated, nevertheless by no means will scramble into a seat which is made vacant, if a woman be by unseated; and yet I see not why he may not seize at once what he may keep afterwards. Now, if, with that gentle deference which ought to be in every man's soul for a woman, he thinks of her *first*, and feels for her *most*, he will be as uncomfortable in retaining his seat, as he would think himself a boor if he scrambled for it. This will help us see how actions shall be judged, whether they be selfish or not. I propose to you this simple test of *time* as to thought, and then of *amount* as to feeling. Which *first* leaps to your mind? Yourself or your neighbor and friend, and the whole? And when you have had the thought, which then do you feel for *most*?

But now you may say, How shall we meet the practical difficulty of judging? The conditions are very complex. How shall we judge always what acts are those that keep the right balance of these three factors, ourselves, our near ones, and the great world? Ah, but this very definition and test of selfishness helps us to answer, for we have seen that selfishness is a matter of impulse and feeling, impulse to think of ourselves first, and to feel for ourselves most. Now if a man have strong sense, good mind, clear thinking, and he be unselfish, the impulse will leap in his heart to think of others first, and then his strong sense easily will find the right measure of care and pains for himself. He will run little risk of deciding ill, because his impulse will be against the chief danger, and his sound sense rule his impulse. But if his heart leap for himself, in the line of the danger,

then his sense will be given to finding great, ample and lucrative ways to feed his own wishes; and as his heart leaps so will he follow, and be clean gone over into the peril, and see naught clearly but his own selfish wishes.

With this clear view, now, of selfishness, that it lies in the *first* thought being for ourselves, and the *most* feeling for ourselves, apply it to the riches of life, and it will appear, if I mistake not, that the selfish soul can take little of these riches. As the riches of life which nature is, comes unto us, the glories and lights and joys of creation, how can selfishness see and know these friends of the soul? Its eye is turned inward to look at its own greeds or profits, for its own grabbings, not outward turned, to see what matter will fill the eye with light and beauty. Again, selfishness never will seek knowledge and beauty for their own high sakes and purely, being occupied all with its own self, and its own advantages to be obtained; and when knowledge and beauty are not sought for their own pure sakes, we fall very far short of the riches of them. Again, there will not be humility enough in the selfish to take the riches of nature and knowledge. For of all vanity what greater than to deem oneself worthy to be one's own complete and perfect pursuit and care? "What," says Joubert, "possibly can one introduce into a mind already full, and full of self?" I know it is said often that a moral and lofty tone of mind is not needful to the highest and most quickened enjoyment of nature. We are told that if one be endowed with sense of harmony in colors and sounds, the perception of shapes and lines, the symmetry and beauty of curves, then he will see the charms of nature and rejoice in them, and have them all turn their riches into him, even though he be a treacherous and selfish soul. No, it is not so. Selfishness never can go beneath the surface of shape and color, nor know the beauty which is soul and meaning, nor see the divinity in nature, being contrary to it.

The next riches of life, I said, was human love. Selfishness has not this riches, nor can have, nor be aught but against the very nature of this riches. For selfishness is the thinking of oneself first, and feeling for oneself most. But if love mean anything under heaven, it means to think of another first, and feel for that other most. Selfishness, therefore, never attains the

eminence of the bliss of love, nor knows indeed anything but the shell and outward show of it. "The selfish affect no man otherwise than he seemeth able to serve their turn. All their shows of friendship and respect are mercenary and mere trade." Besides, selfishness eats away gratefulness. This follows of necessity on the pride and conceit of selfish men, because, not being humble-minded, and being so eager to get things, they take everything as due to them; and how can one be grateful for his own? And yet gratefulness, the dear delicious sense of obligation, leaning on, resting on, owing to, some one we love, is one of the most fair traits, the most blissful necessities, the sweetest rewards, of the affections. I know that some speak of love as being possibly selfish. They combine the two words together. They say there is a love which is real and must be called love, but is in truth a fierce "passion for possession." Away! I will refuse to name love a "passion for possession." Whether the English language need another word for whatever feeling that may be which is phrased as a "passion for possession," I say not, though often I have wished for such a word. But, however, I will not use for it that title of LOVE which means elements as pure and simple and as forth-putting into another's life, as the creativeness of God. Fichte says, "The enjoyment of a single hour passed happily in the pursuit of art or science far outweighs a whole lifetime of sensual enjoyment, and before this picture of blessedness the mere sensual man, could it be brought home to him, would sink in envy and dismay." And, in like manner, say I that one hour, or one fleeting moment, of the purity of love outweighs a lifetime or universe of "passion for possession," ay, and is a purity and heavenliness of joy before which the passionate man, could it be brought home to him, would sink in envy and dismay. When sometimes I have dwelt on this topic in my lone thinking on the sights of the world, and in my weighing of friendships—for who must not do this, sad though it be?—I have seen that there are two modes of loving, the passionate and the tender, and that the passionate is really but a selfish thirst for having, and the tender, a divine thinking of another first, and feeling for that other most. Of the joys of this love which makes the supreme riches of life, the selfish never can dream.

Here enters what I said of this second domain of riches, that it is a delight of love *and* liberty. You will remember that I promised to tell you why specially I added *liberty*. 'Tis because there is no true love without reverence for freedom; and this "passion for possession," the bastard that artfully puts on the robe and purple of the pure stock of love, always will show its base, fierce falseness by invading liberty. True love leaves the one free who is beloved, treads very gently and softly on the threshold of his mind, his will, his nature; will not encroach, will not oppress, nor overpower. But selfishness oppresses, desiring only to own, to have, to bind to itself. Oh, the misery, the death, that follow this trampling on personal dignity in love, on the liberty of the mind and the will! The torment and shame of it, the wretched fate of being so degraded, subject to another, under him and pressed to death, the will all destroyed and lifeless, individual features suppressed, crushed out of all shape, the desires and good pleasure and purpose and self-direction of the mind bruised to an aching livid flesh, not daring to decide aught, but always waiting for leave, always begging grace or allowance, or hinting a wish fearfully, such abjectness, such slavery—who can bear it? Who can inflict it but the most cruel or the most unthinking? When 'tis done, when 'tis wreaked and brooked, love flies away doubly; for neither can the one who is trampled love very dearly the heart that grinds down the foot, nor can he, the trampler, love well the thing lying meanly under his heel. "There is no friendship without equality;" no, nor love of lovers either, whether besought or wedded, however some prate loosely or vilely of this great human joy in equal state. There may be indeed a "passion of possession" without equality; yea, I think that that hatefulness seeks the pliant and weak who may be bended and looped into any shape and tied up in any manner. But there is no love without equality of spirit standing at one level of dignity and looking face into face and eye into eye at one height of mutual respect and observance. 'Tis not needful that the two shall have like riches or position or genius or knowledge, if they have the like holy grace of revering another's will, freedom and personal being, not to tread on it or assault it or touch it rudely. Without this mutual and reverent liberty, I say again there is no love;

and I would I could cry it like a trumpet till every household rang with it—no love, naught worth that heaven-name, naught living, as love lives. but a mere vogue, a show, a simulation, a mask painted on a dead face. For love is so mighty an exercise of the spirit and so stretches all the powers of the soul, needing the greatest nobility to do it well, that no art, no conquest nor prowess is to be likened to it—above any poetry and music, a greater feat of soul than any eloquence, more to be admired than reasoning, than the making of science or the collecting of history or any human glory. How then can loving be done well by the broken in spirit, bowed down, set at the beck of another, waiting a master's nod, a slave, a he lot, an understrapper,—how can such a bound, badged, abased vassal, a cowed creature, a groaning spirit, despising its portion, come to the whole great estate of love? 'Tis not possible; yet more possible than that the enslaver, who has made a fellow-being an underling, overridden a tender brow and trampled down a will, can come to nobleness of love or be seized of the wide freehold of it. Love in tyranny is but half itself, either in delight or in power, and no more can fly the heavens than a bird with one wing severed. And what human power indeed is itself, or whole, if unfreed? or what can stretch a wing above the earth if the other wing, freedom, be gone? As Cato said he would fight, not to be free himself, but to live in a country of freemen, so must the twain wedded into one draw the sword of the spirit, not each for his own good pleasure, but to live together in a two-peopled world of the free! Then come light and joy, tenderness, courage, brightness, wit, beauty, health and strength, nimbleness, undertakings, deeds. Naught can measure the force and bliss of the heart in love where the will of each is left free, personal, individual, unhurt, revered,—self-respect and dignity bukked on love and reverence, like a fair city on a two-peaked hill. This is a vast double riches of life, the joy and riches of love and liberty, as I have said; but these riches are not for the selfish man. He can get but part of the double wealth, and that but a groveling portion, lacking the other wing wherewith to soar. For selfishness can leave nothing free which can be gotten, clutched, put to its own use and purpose, made over into its own pattern, and wholly pounced on, usurped, appropriated. I say the

selfish man is estopped of love. Let it be cried aloud over and over that selfishness can not love. For it, this pure riches of life exists not; and how better, or more like love, is a "passion to possess" a person than a greed for owning things?

But if this now be the case with the nearest, that there is no joy of love, and no knowledge of the riches of life for the selfish, how much more is this so toward the more distant! The selfish man will be displeased with the excellence and good things of others, because they are not his. Hence, others' riches are his poverty. What a poverty that is! And if we take the widest scope, the relation of the mind, heart and soul to mankind, the power to find the riches of life in this wide view—the truth is the same, that these riches belong only to the unselfish. For the unselfish man who thinks of another first, and of the whole first, beholds the quality of mankind unrolled like a fair map of a fair realm. Ah! friends, we gain great power to see the truth when the truth is all we wish to see. Unselfishness is divining. Easily it sees the balance of right action, as I have said. We shall not be long deciding, nor go far astray, if our impulse be contrary to the danger, and we wish before all to see what is due and truthful and right. But what is this? To see what is true, to make right decisions, to know the balance, is naught but the same as to spread society fair and beautiful before us, as it is in nature and destiny—a transporting sight, a glorious riches and great wealth; but never for the selfish, who, deciding not rightly in this delicate balance, see society all awry, one estranged from another, and all in disorder and jangle, like bells out of tune, though hung for sweet concords.

Finally, come we to the third realm of the riches of life, namely, labor and obedience. Again I say, selfishness cannot take these riches. Selfishness loves ease, complaining of labor. Also what sense has it of that implication of one with another which is the human family, in which also lies the urgency of labor, that all must work together fairly, since no man can live or stand by himself? For selfishness thinks of itself first, and as first, and feels for itself most; whereas all are of equal import. "In reason," says Barrow, "is it not very absurd that any man should look on himself as more than a single person?"

* * * May not any man reasonably have the same apprehensions and inclinations as we may have? May not any man justly proceed in the same manner as we may do? Will they not, seeing us mainly affect our private interests, be induced, and in a manner forced, to do the like. Then what need can there be for propping and scrambling for things, and in the confusion thence arising, what quiet, what content, can we enjoy?

* * * As we are all born members of the world, as we are compacted into the commonwealth, as we are incorporated into any society, as we partake in any conversation or company, so by mutual support, aid, defence, comfort, not only the common welfare first, but our own particular benefit consequently, doth subsist. By hindering or prejudicing them, the public first, in consequence our particular, doth suffer. Our thriving by the common prejudice will in the end turn to our own loss. As if one member sucketh too much nourishment to itself and then swelleth into an exorbitant bulk, the whole thence incurreth disease, so coming to perish or languish, whence consequently that irregular member will fall into a participation of ruin or decay, so it is in the state of human corporations. He that in way unnatural or unjust—for justice is that in human societies which nature is in the rest of things—draweth unto himself the juice of profit or pleasure, so as thence to grow beyond his due size, doth thereby not only create distempers in the public body, but worketh mischief and pain to himself.” Wherefore, I say, that the dignity, the grace, the riches of labor is not for selfishness, that delves thus but to make all a disease, an infamy, and counts work but a pain if it cannot have therewith, too, as much gain as can be heaped up from others despoiled of it.

Selfishness, again, hates obedience. For the selfish man thinks of himself first, that is, as best. Therefore, he would command or lead always, never follow, nor obey, nor be second. Also he feels for himself most. Therefore, he would have his own will, and never suffer aught even that another may not suffer. Moreover, selfishness has no humility, as before I have said, for the man who thinks of himself always first and feels for himself most, must do so surely because he thinks he deserves such a first place, and he must think he ought to have it in others’ thoughts as well as his own. Hence he will know naught

of the blessed humility with riches which obedience is.

Here must I not omit one of the great riches of life of which I have said naught, the rich stores of labor and obedience in the memory when old age draws on. "It is to live twice, when we can enjoy the recollections of our former life." But what recollections can we enjoy? Only those against which selfishness is set and will have naught to do with them, and cannot have to do with them—the glories of nature and of man, the blessed riches of beauty, not open to the selfish soul, as I have said. But glowing memories, if gathered by the eye of love and humble observation, do inhabit the soul to store it like a great warehouse with riches. A beautiful example I have met in the life of Niebuhr, the celebrated Danish traveler. "When old, blind, and so infirm that he was able only to be carried from his bed to his chair, he used to describe to his friends the scenes which he had visited in his early days with wonderful minuteness and vivacity. When they expressed their astonishment, he told them that as he lay in bed, all visible objects shut out, the pictures of what he had seen in the East continually floated before his mind's eye, so that it was no wonder he could speak of them as if he had seen them yesterday. With like vividness the deep intense sky of Asia, with its brilliant and twinkling host of stars, which he had so often gazed at by night, or its lofty vault of blue by day, was reflected, in the hours of stillness and darkness, on his inmost soul." Of this traveler it has been remarked that in his many journeyings, and rich accounts thereof, he leaves himself strangely out of view; by which it was that he piled up such riches within himself. The life of the heart's blissful recollections and scenes of undying beauty, these are not for the selfish, nor the fruits of labor and obedience in the spirit of law and duty and service; not for the selfish, but for those who by love, labor and humility become like these virtues. Unto them, the riches of life become in the soul beautiful pictures, and truly labor-stores and obedience-peace; and they pour their riches into the memory of old age. Whence, perhaps, it is one of those wondrous marvels of our constitution whereon we must look with devout eyes, that age delights to look backward; for this is but to view the great riches of life, which wait on him who has loved them, single-minded, but wished not to get them apart for himself. The law is clear,

wonderful and noble, that "virtue indeed will give us power and place in the world; but if we seek the power, we have not the virtue." So the riches of life, beauty, grandeur, feeling, mighty riches of joy and understanding, will come to the soul of humble knowledge-seeking, of steady labor, of faithful obedience; but if one seek the riches, he has not such a soul; nay, but is one who of himself thinks first, and for himself feels most. The riches of life would be far greater in their joyful forms than they are, if all men were generous and loving; which shows what a solemn responsibility and weight of the Father's ordaining is laid on us here. For then the riches would be increased by ourselves, whose powers of heart and soul are the greatest riches of all earth's riches. But as it is, the riches of these so beautiful forms have to be replaced in great, and very weary, part, by the riches of sorrow and of too hard laboring.

Finally, how can the selfish man love God, the riches of the riches "The Eternal is in man and surrounds him at all times," says Fichte; "man has but to forsake the transitory and perishable [which is to say, the use of nature and men for his own glory, power and pleasure] with which the true life never can associate, and thereupon the Eternal, with all its blessedness, forthwith will come and dwell with him. We cannot win blessedness, but we may cast away our wretchedness [which is simply to seek no more our own glory, power and pleasure,] and thereupon blessedness forthwith of itself will supply the empty place. Blessedness is repose in the One and Eternal, wretchedness is vagrancy amid the manifold and transitory [which is struggles and thoughts to use nature and men for our own glory, power or pleasure]: and, therefore, the condition of our becoming blessed is the return of our love from the many to the One;" or to love the One in the many; as Augustine hath it, "To love God, and our friend in God, and our enemy for God." But how can the selfish man return, or how have this love to the One? How love the One in the beauties and glories of creation, since he thinks not of him first, but of himself first, to get power and pleasure from the holy glories of creation? How love the One in whom the many human beings are, since he thinks not first of the many who are in the One, but of himself first? How love the One whose hand and law give labors, yea, and sorrows, since the selfish man thinks not first of the One whose

commandments the labors are, but of himself first, how he may get ease, how he may turn the work all to his own power or pleasure. How can the selfish man love the One, the God and Father? of whom says Seneca, "All his power is to do good," and "He is neither willing nor able to harm us," and "No sane man fears him," so all-loving and all-good is he unto all. But let us cast out this wretchedness, this poverty, that we may become rich with the riches of life!

Here ends this long sermon in three parts. I have striven to set before you the vast and glorious riches of life—according to the psalmist's verse, "The earth is full of thy riches." I have tried to set forth—

The riches of life in Creation—the joys of the senses and of knowledge:

The riches of life in Mankind—the joy of love and liberty:

The riches of life in Experience of Ourselves—the joy of labor and obedience.

Truly, are not these great riches? Is not life very rich? We have but to take it, and we are like kings with full treasures.

O! let us look about us, on earth and sky, to be full of joy in these splendors all about us and over us! "These are but the varied God," "the rolling year is full of him," "the field's wide flush, the softening air, the mountains echoing round, the smiling forests," the chanting waters! Let me not be self-hooded, blind amid these. And let me labor, which is honor and glory and peace, taking the riches of life freely. And let me have that love which makes all things riches—

"O let me not walk in his splendors,
 Splendors of innocence in babes,
 Of joy, woe, pathos, in mid-life,
 And of the majesty of age—
 Blind, senseless, like a clod or stone,
 Or with my eyes prone earthward, brute-like,
 Peering for prey to feed ambition.
 But let me know the things God makes,
 And worship what he sets on high.
 O let me feel the pang, the woe,
 The shame, that any other knows,
 And know the praise, the honor, glory,
 Of lowly hearts living beside me."

These are riches of life; deeper than hell, for these riches have choked up hell and filled the pit thereof and covered the mouth and smoothed it with green turf; as deep as heaven, for 'tis heaven they are.